

Step - Touch

Objective: Starting from a sit at heel position, the dog explodes up to nose target your left hand over head, just as you step forward.

Why: This exercise teaches the skill the dog needs to go from a sit at heel to a heads up moving trot. For most dogs, the tendency is to drop their weight forward and their head down when they start moving out of a sit. This makes it that much harder to find a collected trot and also increases the likelihood of losing focus. So we are splitting that “first step” transition out from the rest of the pattern to teach separately.

This also begins to put formal cues on some of the little heeling pieces.

This is early on and my hand placement is WAY too far forward:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2kmg8NuS9I&index=12&list=PL3iB_cmFKZ17yhTFprm3Y1dcp9TAbbjNz

This is not as easy as it looks....Practice without the dog first!!

Here is the WHOLE sequence including other cues that you will be using in the ring that we will eventually build into this sequence: (THIS IS NOT WHERE YOU ARE STARTING)

1. Start by reviewing the high hand touch beside you. Click and reinforce for touching your hand.
2. Set the dog up by luring him into heel.
3. Eye contact with dog.
4. Smile.
5. Say “ready!”
6. Shift eyes forward.
7. Say “Heel” (or other cue)
8. Step forward.
9. Hand touch.
10. C/t the hand touch.

Once you’ve got the rhythm of your actions down, add the dog.

Now WITH the dog, we are going to start with just the last part. The step forward-hand touch. Your foot moves before your hand. Your eyes move before your foot.

1. Eyes on dog.
2. Eyes to ground—about 2 feet in front of the dog.
3. Left foot forward.
4. Hand touch in heel position.
5. Mark and reward.
6. Randomize how long you wait before providing the hand touch.

Making it harder over the next few weeks (NOT NOW):

Gradually increasing the amount of time you wait until you get to 3 full breaths. Reset if the dog drops his head. If you have two errors in a row, decrease your wait time.

<https://youtu.be/7sKd6Px1ew0>

7. When that is going well, add your ready cue before shifting your eyes. Again, randomize how long you wait. Repeat until the dog is anticipating the hand touch. Add your heel cue if desired.

Gradually build the whole chain—for reference, it took me 3 months to get to the point of taking breaths and him staying connected to me!